CREATIVE LIVING

RAMJIVAN SINHA

ADYAR

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BY

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FOREWORD

THE contents of this booklet were first published in *The Theosophical Review* of the Indian Section, and some Federation journals in India.

In simple and clear language they contain a beautiful exposition of the Ancient Wisdom, stressing the importance of fundamental principles such as the Oneness of Life, Universal Brotherhood, Self-preparation, etc., not only theoretically but also *practically*, as a way of life truly creative and Theosophical. They are inspiring and stimulate that inner urge in the reader without which no successful attempt can be made to approach and tread the Path leading to genuine Self-knowledge and ultimately to Perfection.

ZOLTAN DE ÁLGYA-PĀP

Adyar, Madras
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CREATIVE LIVING

We are passing through a most difficult period of time. The individual is unhappy, is in sorrow and suffering. He is confused and bewildered and there is also confusion, conflict and chaos around him at numerous places, in this country and abroad. It seems we have lost the sense of the right values of life. How to get out of this utterly confused state of things? How to irradiate our own individual lives and the surrounding darkness? Such are the questions which agitate the serious-minded intelligentsia of today.

If we observe nature around us, the hills and jungles, the plants and trees, the animals and the little children, we see so much of order and beauty, freshness and joy everywhere. But what a contrast in our lives and in the society around us! Only conflict and sorrow! Human life is not only mysterious but most

precious. We are here to live and to live together. We have to find the right way of living so that not only our individual lives are rich and happy but our corporate life also is harmonious, peaceful and progressive.

Each individual is trying to fulfil himself in many ways, but generally, as he is confused, he is not able to make the best of life. This is mainly due to the fact that he is not living creatively. A creative act is a source of happiness for all time to come. A work of true art, be it of painting, sculpture, music, dance, poetry or the like, is indeed a source of great joy and happiness. Surely the way to fulfilment of life appears to be through creative living.

What is creative living? It is to be able to do anything original by oneself. A thing or work which is one's own is creative, whether it be to sing a song or to dance, to paint or carve, to compose a poem or to write an article or even to swim or to drive a car or to pilot an aircraft or to organise or run a big business concern. All such acts are creative, and they all deserve the best support and encouragement. But they may only be partial or superficial

expressions of our being, and as such there may be contradictions in life, much of ugliness in our conduct and behaviour in contrast to occasional, creative expressions as abovementioned.

We learn from the study of Theosophy, the Ancient Wisdom, that while man is alive, his inner principles, namely Spirit, Intuition, Intellect, lower Manas and Kama, all are mixed together; that at our best moments we get some rays of light or inspiration from the higher principles and we produce a beautiful work of art; and that there are moments when we fall back from such heights and are prone to kamic influences, which lead to contradictions in life. Very often, therefore, we find instances of self-indulgence, moral laxity or looseness, psychical imbalance, loneliness or depression in the life of artists.

We are trying to discover ways of total creative living in which there is no such contradiction, in which the life-stream flows freely and smoothly, in all its loveliness and beauty all the time.

In a garden there are many plants and trees and we find that each fulfills itself in due

season with a uniqueness which is its own, except where its growth is thwarted by some natural calamity or by some cruel act of animal or man. The life in each expresses itself freely. Each tree or plant as it grows expresses a Beauty, a Truth and a Goodness of its own. In structure, foliage, flower or fruit, each is unique in its own way and an object of beauty and joy. In them there is no comparison, no competition, no contradiction. A mango tree, a jack tree, a cocoanut tree or the like—each is just what it is in its inherent being.

Is man living so creatively? Excepting some rare flowers of humanity most of us are not. Why not? In other words, what are the hindrances which prevent us from living creatively, i.e., naturally and freely like a tree with a uniqueness of our own? First, we should understand those actions of ours which are not creative. Often our actions are mechanical or habitual. There is a general urge to acquire wealth, position or power and very often young men coming out of universities, as also other people, are led away by such an urge and enter into some service or profession or business in which they hope to find fulfilment

of their ambition; and on such entry, they just follow a routine and get into a rut and their lives become more or less mechanical. This applies even to a religious worker, to a teacher or a social or political worker. When the individual is led to such a profession by lust for pleasure, for self-security or self-glorification, life becomes mechanical. Such a life is different from the one devoted to a work for love of the work.

In the course of our lives we acquire certain habits, such as habits of smoking, drinking and the like. When such habits are well-formed, we think we are such habits and we pursue a course of life which is automatic or mechanical, unmindful of consequences, and we suffer and at times suffer bitterly. Surely such mechanical or habitual living is not creative living.

Similarly, when we imitate another, or when we act under fear, fear of authority or of pain, public opinion or of death, or when we act for any personal consideration, reward or recognition, or when we act under extraneous pressure or influence, we are not creative. When a judge acts under such a pressure or influence or for some selfish consideration,

his judgment is tainted and is not creative. A judgment which is unbiased and uninfluenced, absolutely free and independent may truly be said to be creative.

When we act due to ambition, are we creative? Ambition may be distinguished from aspiration. All impulses which have inspired the great benefactors of humanity to noble living, to a life of service and self-sacrifice for the good of mankind are worth emulation. Ambition, however, is *kama* or lust, lust for position, power or money. It is essentially selfish and egoistic. Such ambition is a great hindrance to creative living.

Desire is an expression of life and essentially there is nothing wrong with any desire. Desires for fulfilment of essential human needs are quite natural, but to desire things simply for hoarding, for self-glorification, for self-indulgence or the like is creating hindrances or bondage and all such actions are not creative. All wasteful actions are destructive and therefore not creative.

When a person is moved by ambition or lust for position, power or money, is he creative? This has to be carefully examined and

understood. An ambitious person is very often narrow and selfish, crooked and cruel. Hence the age-old injunctions to free oneself from the domination of *kama*. It is very well known how in the second chapter of the *Gita*, when Arjuna asks Lord Krishna as to what are the characteristics of a stable-minded person, the very first *sloka* of the reply that the Lord gives is most striking:

> ' When man forsakes all his inmost desires and is content within himself by himself, such a person is stable-minded.'

If some of us were asked that question, probably we would have simply said that a stable-minded person is one who is calm and unruffled, but the Lord has gone to the very core of the matter; for it is only when the mind is free from the domination of *kama*, that it really becomes stable and calm, spontaneously.

In *Light on the Path* also the first injunction is ' Kill out ambition '. One of the Holy Ones commenting on this line makes a beautiful statement: ' Ambition is the first curse of mankind, the great tempter of the man who is rising above his fellows. It is the simplest

form of looking for reward. Men of intelligence and power are led away from their higher possibilities by it continually. Yet it is a necessary teacher. Its results turn to dust and ashes in the mouth; like death and estrangement, it shows the man at last that to work for self is to work for disappointment. But though this rule seems so simple and easy, do not quickly pass it. For these vices of the ordinary man pass through a subtle transformation and reappear with changed aspect in the heart of the disciple. It is easy to say: "I will not be ambitious"; it is not so easy to say: "When the Master reads my heart, He will find it clean utterly." The pure artist who works for the love of his work is sometimes more firmly planted on the right road than the occultist who fancies he has removed his interest from self, but who has in reality only enlarged the limits of experience and desire, and transferred his interest to things which concern his larger span of life.'

Even when we may forsake coarse desires, subtler desires may remain in us. All desires are to be understood and transcended. What is required is that our hearts should be clean

utterly. It seems that the creative way is the way of living or doing when one is not moved by anything external, and that way is very near the way of a true artist who works for the love of his work.

Sri N. Sri Ram, International President of the Theosophical Society, has made a significant statement: 'Each of us contains within himself the formula of his creation, his uniqueness, according to which is his expansion in time, the curve of his progress.' But the discovery of the formula of creation is possible only when we understand and transcend the present uncreative propensities and activities of our minds. At present our minds are greatly conditioned, not only due to external influences such as family traditions, caste or race prejudices, religious ideas, but also due to our own desires and passions. This is an important fact which we should try to see and recognise. Creativity cannot come into being so long as the mind is so tethered to things outside, or even to its own desires, ideas or memories. Sometimes an individual comes across a case of accident in which the person injured happens to be one who had injured

him previously. He may just react through memory and leave him but that would not be a pure action. Only a pure action is creative.

So before we understand the mystery of creative living, we must face these minds of ours, try to understand their ceaseless subtle workings intelligently, and finally, through awareness, free them completely from their conditionings and moorings. This is the main problem before us. So, as Mr. J. Krishnamurti suggests, we should begin with self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is the knowledge of himself and by himself, as he is and as he acts in relationship with others from day to day or from hour to hour. This is attained by dispassionate examination of all his thoughts, feelings and behaviour, by self-recollectedness or choiceless awareness, as Mr. Krishnamurti would say.

At present we are naturally very proud of our minds. They have to their credit great scientific achievements and wonders, but little do we realise that psychologically, our minds are in great bondage, are working under great limitations, that they are not free agents, and that it is for this reason that we are not

able to solve life's problems. We must see for ourselves that our minds are really so chained, so enslaved; only then we will realise for ourselves the necessity of freeing them from bondage. It is said: 'Ambition is the first curse of mankind. Kill out ambition.' Can we do it just by listening to the words of the sages? The Lord has said this in the *Gita*, and we have been reading the *Gita* for years and years, but are we free from *kama*? Have we realised for ourselves that it is a thing which should be transcended, that it is a thing which should leave us? Unless we see for ourselves, unless we realise for ourselves that ambition is really a curse, no amount of reading a book, no amount of listening to the saints and *sadhus* will enable us to be free from the domination of ambition or *kama*. We must understand it for ourselves through our own awareness.

The urgent need for most of us is to cease to float with the surging thoughts of the crowd. Many of us are like logs of wood floating along with the current of the stream. We must wake up and restrain ourselves and cease to go with the crowd. In our daily life we should have an attitude of quiet attentiveness. Whatever

things we have to do, attending to children, working in the office and the like, we should do with our full attention and do them well. In that way we shall develop awareness. When we are wakeful, when we are aware, we shall have right discrimination—*viveka*—and we shall be able to see things for ourselves; we shall be able to realise the essential values of things around us—of money, position, power, wife, children, property, etc. And such discrimination will lead us to *vairagya*—desirelessness—and a stage will come, surely come, when we shall be free from the domination of ambition or *kama*.

As we are, most of us are dominated by lust for position and power, and we are more like animals than the true human beings we fundamentally are. As said in *At the Feet of the Master*:

'There are many for whom the qualification of desirelessness is a difficult one, for they feel that they are their desires and that if their distinctive desires, their likings and dislikings are taken away from them, there will be no self left. But these are only they who have not seen the Master; in the light of His Holy Presence

all desire dies except the desire to be like Him.'

Many of the *bhaktas* have in agony cried for help of the Lord. They have said that they are being drowned in the *Bhava-Sagar*, the ocean of desires, that the many creatures therein are about to devour them, and have prayed to the Lord to come quickly and save them. But Mira's prayer in one of her songs is very striking; she says her *Bhava-Sagar* has dried up and she has no anxiety to cross it. What is after all the world in which each of us is living? If we look within, we shall see that most of us are living in a world created by our own desires and ideas. As a spider weaves a cocoon around itself out of fibres drawn from within itself and stays therein catching the flies and other insects, whatever come within and are caught in that area, so most of us are living in the world of our own, of *kama*, desires and passions. If this *kama* goes, the *Bhava-Sagar* dries up. Mira says her *Bhava-Sagar* is dried up because there is no desire in her; her whole being is concentrated in or dedicated to the Lord. In the latter part of her song, she says her whole angle of vision has changed.

It is that thing which is needed—a complete revolution within oneself, a complete change of outlook and angle of vision, and when that comes, then freedom from *kama* is as easy as the falling of a dry leaf from the branch of a tree.

Let us realise that the freedom from the domination of ambition or *kama* is not an impossibility, it is a natural stage to which all of us will grow one day with the help of our understanding, and the way lies within ourselves. The way lies through wakefulness and awareness, discrimination and desirelessness. When the mind is understood and made stable, and the individual is established in himself, then only creative living begins.

Deep down within the consciousness of man is the root of his being and that is the source of all life, light and love. Creative living is the natural and free expression of that source of being in each individual. So each has to become just himself, what he is in the innermost depths of his being; that is creative living.

But this is not possible so long as the mind is wedded to *kama*. A man may be very learned,

very bright intellectually, but he will not be truly creative if psychologically his mind is ridden with lust for wealth, position or power. Man is fundamentally divine by nature. This is the unanimous assertion of saints and sages of all ages. As a seed contains within itself the potentiality of growing into a big tree, likewise the Divine potentialities of the Supreme, His Power, Wisdom and Love are all imbedded in man's nature, and man is here just to unfold gradually those Divine potentialities. This Divinity in man, however, can not manifest so long as the mind of man is clouded by *kama*. Creative living is such living by which man is able to make manifest his divine nature, and this begins with the subjugation or transcending of *kama*.

There are two important ways to creative living that may be suggested:

1. The first is to act from the highest pitch of oneself, for in that case we are not far from the centre of our being. As Sri N. Sri Ram says, ' Each must discover his own way in life and that way lies in his heart. Let him delve deeply into the depths of his being, his true centre is not far from there.'

Dr. Besant has said 'Theosophy is the living of the highest ideal that one is capable of doing with the noblest ability.' Creative living is such living of the highest ideal.

2. The second is to do a definite work in life, that work which is the true expression of being. The individual should try to discover that work by himself. That is his *Swadharma*. If it is his true work, he will give his whole heart to it. He will have a deep and abiding interest in it. Such work is intensely creative. Surely creative work is that work to which we give our whole being, which we do with full interest and attention and without any ulterior motive.

But as life is, very few get work suited to their temperaments. If such is the case, one should stop fretting and fuming and learn to take an interest in the immediate work assigned to him and give his whole being to that work. Thus working he will ultimately discover his true work. Great stress is laid on finding and fulfilling our *Svadharma* in Chapter XVIII of the *Gita*. Bro. Raja (C. Jinarājadāsa) used to say that such work was the Archetype of the individual, which he must seek and find, and

in order to bring home his point, he slightly altered the *Maha-Vakya* (the great assertion) *TAD-BRAHMA TAD-ASMI* (That Brahman, That am I) into *TAD-KARMA TAD-ASMI* (That Work, that am I). So, as each being has its uniqueness, each one of us has a special work to do, which is our *Svadharma*. It is only when we are able to discover our *Svadharma* that we find the creative way of living.

Another important fact to bear in mind is that apart from the individual will, there is a mightier Will of the Supreme working in the Universe. It is the cosmic Will which is the source of all creation and in accordance with which the evolution of all lives proceed in the various kingdoms of Nature. As man in essence is one with the Supreme, his creative living consists in harmonising his little will with the Will of the Supreme, which is the pursuit of every true devotee. In *At the Feet of the Master*, it is pointed out that there are two kinds of people, that is, the wise and the unwise, and the wise are those who have a vision of God's Plan which is evolution and who work for the fulfilment of that plan and not for selfishness and that those who do not know 'try to

invent ways for themselves which they think will be pleasant for themselves, not understanding that all are one and that therefore only what the One wills can ever be really pleasant for any one.' So, to act in consonance with the Will of the One is creative action.

Man's happiness lies in establishing harmony within himself, the poise of reason and love, by understanding his inmost desires and making his mind free and pure, calm and serene and thus allowing his truest Self that is deep down within himself to express itself naturally and freely in all its purity and beauty. Such an individual is in spontaneous harmony with others and such are the ways of creative living.

FROM CIRCUMFERENCE TO CENTRE

TODAY man is in sorrow and suffering because he mostly acts or reacts from the periphery of his consciousness and not from the centre. If he could act from the centre of his consciousness, there would be an integration of his personality and thereby there would result poise and harmony in his behaviour. How to learn to act from the centre? This short essay is an attempt to answer the question.

Theosophy reveals that along with the evolution of form there is proceeding the evolution of life, and simultaneously there is also the growth of consciousness. There is no form without an indwelling life and no life without a covering form or organism to express itself. Similarly, life and consciousness co-exist and together evolve.

The origin of life is shrouded in mystery. It comes from some source, hidden or unknown. Theosophy posits that there is nothing like dead matter in the universe. There is no

matter without force and no force without matter. When such matter was organised in the hoary past under the pressure and guidance of a mighty intelligent Power, life appeared on the scene and along with it consciousness emerged.

There are several kingdoms of nature, the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human, besides other kingdoms in the subtler regions. We see life growing in the vegetable, the animal and the human but it is apparently difficult to perceive such life in the mineral. Yet, as a Sufi poet has said: life is only asleep in the mineral. Modern science also corroborates and discovers pulsations of life in the mineral. Life is universal and co-extensive with the universe.

As the indwelling life evolves, the form or the vehicle which it uses becomes more and more organised. As the life-wave passes from one kingdom into another through vast æons of time, such growth in both the organism and the indwelling life is markedly noticeable and also the simultaneous growth of consciousness. Plants are more evolved than minerals, and similarly animals and men are more evolved than plants and animals respectively.

Consciousness is sensitivity. A dead body is insensitive, whereas a living person is sensitive—sensitive to external impacts and also to inner urges. Plants are conscious, sensitive to light and air, heat and cold. Animals are more conscious. They are not only sensitive but also intelligent. Sensitivity is the capacity to feel and know; whereas, intelligence is the capacity to think and know; and both are aspects of consciousness and are rooted in life.

Man is not only conscious but self-conscious, having the capacity not only to fathom the outer depths of the vast space of the universe but also the inner reaches of his own most mysterious being. Man's consciousness is like a great tree with many branches, intuition, intellect, emotion and the like, its root hidden in the deep unknown, maybe the Divine Seed or Unit of Life, the Monad of the Theosophist or a Spark of the Divine Flame, विस्फुलिंग (*Vishphulinga* of the *Upanishad*), a Fragment of Myself ममैवांशो (*Mamaivamsho* of the *Gita*), or a Fragment of God, the *Jiva* immortal (ईश्वर अंश जीव अविनाशी—*Ishvara Amsa Jiva Avinashi* —as said by Tulsi).

The Divine seed or spark is the root of life and centre of consciousness. Rarely do we act from this centre. Very often we are either led away by senses or emotions or thoughts, past memories or future anticipations. If we could act with the wholeness of being, with the best of thoughts and emotions, we would be very near the centre. Mr. Krishnamurti has aptly said: 'The poise of Reason and Love is Liberation'. Liberation is from the domination of the part into the freedom of the whole. In this connection, the following from the *Kathopanishat* would be found to be of great significance:—

न सन्दृशे तिष्ठति रुपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।
हृदा मनीषा मनसा ऽभिक्लृप्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

'His form stands not within the vision's field, with eye no man beholds Him. By mind, *mind-ruling in the heart*, is He revealed. That, they who know, immortal they become.'—6/9

In order to act from the centre, it is therefore necessary to develop a certain poise or balance and a condition of wakefulness or thoughtfulness in daily behaviour. One of the requisites

for self-realisation as mentioned in the *Upanishad* is constant mindfulness (समनस्क: *Samanaskah*). Very often, during our waking hours, we are either sleepy or dreamy, but if we would act from our centre, we must learn to be wakeful and alert and act with total attention—'with all your being, with your body, with your nerves, with your eyes, with your ears, with your mind, with the totality of your energy'—as Mr. Krishnamurti would say.

Listlessness is a great obstacle to the fulfilment of life. A person who is indifferent, not interested in anything, is a failure in life. Life is most precious, an object of beauty and joy. It should not be trifled with. One should take to life with '*joyous seriousness*' as Dr. Arundale used to say. There should be clarity about what one is seeking, and when one is satisfied about the desirability of the object one seeks, there should be whole-heartedness and one-pointedness in one's pursuit. Says H.P.B. in *The Key to Theosophy:*

'. . . never to do a thing by halves; i.e. if he thinks it the right thing to do, let him do it openly and boldly and if wrong, never touch it at all.'

In *At the Feet of the Master*, great stress is laid on one-pointedness. 'You must give all your attention to each piece as you do it, so that it may be your very best',—such is the injunction of the Teacher. So, in order to act from the centre, we must learn to be whole-hearted, one-pointed and all-attentive.

Very often sorrow or suffering or worry upsets our mental balance. What to do? By going to a picture or club, we may temporarily forget about it and escape it, but escape of any kind is not the remedy. The best way to be free of it is to face it boldly and calmly with all attention, to be with it and not to run away from it, as Mr. Krishnamurti suggests. It is only when we embrace a sorrow or suffering as we would meet a friend that we understand its full significance and are free from it. Sometimes the sky is so overlaid with thick layers of dark clouds that it does not appear that the sun will arise again; but as one waits and watches, one finds that the clouds have disappeared and the sun is once more up in the sky in all its glory. Similarly, if we just wait and watch with all attention, the smoke screen of sorrow, suffering or worry will break and evaporate under the

impact of the ultra-violet rays of understanding. The light of understanding emanates only in a condition of cool-headedness and all-mindfulness.

Quiet communion with nature takes one to the heart or soul of all things. Wondrous observation of the beautiful objects of nature, the roaring river, the green fields, the trees laden with delicious fruits, the vast blue dome of sky above the clouds, the chirping of birds and numerous other things, are inspiring. Nature takes one to the centre of one's being *immediately*, provided one approaches her with the wonder of a child and the reverence of a mystic.

Some have found regular hours of deep study and meditation also helpful. Contact with great minds through quiet and deep study and dispassionate observation of oneself, trying to enter into the great depths of one's being and to perceive the great Truths of Life through meditation and contemplation are of inestimable value. To some *Bhajan*, pouring out oneself in adoration of the Supreme as with Tulsidas, Surdas, Mira and others, is the only way to go. Some will say with Bro. Raja, ' Loving action is divine wisdom at work, and whosoever

acts lovingly will inevitably come to the wisdom,' and to them *Loving Action* is the only way. Yet, there may be other ways and the individual has to find his own. But this much is certain, that whatever way he may tread, he must be whole-hearted and one-pointed, awake and alert, all-attentive, yet calm and serene, and only thus he may learn to establish himself at the centre of his being and to act from there. Such an individual will be a real centre of Life, Light and Love and in harmony with all life around.

DISCOVERY OF TRUE VOCATION

THE inefficiency or confusion prevailing in states, universities, corporations or other social bodies is due, not in a small measure, to the fact that many of the people working therein are misplaced or misfits. A person working as a teacher might have been more useful as an apprentice in a workshop or as a manager of a business firm; similarly, a person in charge of administration would have served better as a teacher in a university or in the army. Instances of such misfits may be multiplied.

This is mainly due to the fact that the youth coming out of schools, colleges or universities have no perception of the essential values of life. They pass several examinations, not in order to grow in learning but just to qualify themselves for jobs or posts, the more lucrative the better, or to enter some profession which is more paying. They really seek money and comfort, position and power, or in other

words, security, pleasure and name. For them work for the State or the country, youth or the people in general is not of primary concern. They are not interested in the work as such. If some of them, the rare few, take an interest in the work, that is just as a means for the achievement of their main objective.

As man is not seeking his work but security, he is today ambitious, greedy, self-centred, competitive, full of lust for power and position. With the advancement of science, he is now more armed with power for destruction than he was half a century back; and even after the two great World Wars, he is still causing destruction of both human and animal lives on a large scale, in a most callous manner. He has learned to go to the moon or to rotate around the earth, but he has not cared to fathom the depths of his own being and to understand his own heart, much less the heart of his neighbour. Man has just forgotten himself, his human nature, the essential ingredients of which are love and compassion.

Animals and plants under the immediate guidance of nature, are behaving in a much

saner manner than human beings. In them there is no ambition, no competition, no jealousy or hate. Each just expresses itself and is as it should be. The numerous plants and trees, the birds and animals are expressing their basic natures spontaneously, in a most exquisite manner. The root of life in each, in course of time, manifests into a beautiful tree, as it were, with its unique structure, foliage, flowers and fruits, all for the joy and happiness of others.

But man's being is wholly distorted; the life-stream in him does not flow its own course. Many weeds or small islands have come up which impede or obstruct the flow. Nature endowed man with mind to learn to discriminate and to find his own way, but mind gets wedded to *kama*, desire or passion, and blinded by its ensnaring glamour, is not able to see things in their true perspective. *Kama-manas*, i.e. mind dominated and led by *kama*, is the hub of consciousness in the vast majority of people today, with the result that man has lost perception of his true vocation, his *Sva-dharma* and is at war with himself and his neighbour.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, great stress is laid on finding and fulfilling one's *Sva-dharma*. The following three verses are important:

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरत: संसिद्धिं लभते नर: ।
स्व-कर्मनिरत: सिद्धिं यथा विन्दति तच्छृणु ॥

'Man reacheth perfection by each being intent on his own duty. Listen thou how perfection is won by him who is intent on his own duty.'

यत: प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानव: ॥

'He from whom is the emanation of beings, by whom all this is pervaded, by worshipping Him in his own duty—a man winneth perfection.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुण: परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।
स्वभावनियतं कर्म कुर्वन् नाप्नोति किल्बिषम् ॥

'Better is one's own duty, though destitute of merits than the well-executed duty of another. He who doeth the duty laid down by his own nature incurreth not sin.'

—Chapter XVIII, Slokas 45-47.

Each should try to know *the duty laid down by his own nature*, for in the performance of such duty is the fulfilment of his life, leading to peace and happiness. Mr. J. Krishnamurti, or Krishnaji as many people affectionately call him, in *Life Ahead* makes a similar, profound statement when he says that the aim of education should be to enable the youth not to seek a profession, but to discover his true vocation. There is at present no attempt to enable the youth to discover his true vocation. In the old Central Hindu College which later became the nucleus of the Hindu University at Varanasi, during the days when Dr. G. S. Arundale was the Principal of the College, some attempts were made in this direction so that most of the young men coming out of the College knew what they had to do in life. At that time an attempt was made to impart education in the light of true religious spirit. The motto was *Vidya Dharmena shobhate*, i.e. 'Learning is of value only when it is conjoint with *Dharma*'. In the wake of independence, with the establishment of the secular Government in India, the education imparted in schools and colleges is divorced from the

spirit of true religion or *Dharma* and the youth has no perception of his true vocation.

Mr. C. Jinarajadasa, or Bro. Raja, President of the Theosophical Society for many years, also laid great stress on the individual finding his true work in life, so much so that in order to bring out his point in a telling manner, he slightly altered the *Maha-Vakya*, the great assertion तद् ब्रह्म तदस्मि *Tad Brahma Tadasmi*, 'That Brahman That am I', into तद् कर्म तदस्मि *Tad Karma Tadasmi*, 'That work, That am I'. Each had a special work to do in life, Bro. Raja explained—a work in consonance with his inmost nature, suited to his temperament and nearest and dearest to his heart, and in finding and doing such work was the sweet fulfilment of his life.

How to discover one's true vocation? To find one's true vocation is to know oneself very deeply in the inmost of one's being. The individual should first learn to see and observe within and without—his behaviour, his thoughts and emotions, the animals and the plants, the men, young and old, the sun and the moon, the sky and the stars, the breeze and the clouds, everything in and around him in the vast

embrace of nature. Very often, even when he walks with eyes open, he does not see, for his mind is otherwise pre-occupied. It is only when there is an integration of his being, his mind and the object, that his eyes see.

Worry, sorrow, fear, jealousy, ambition and other forms of self-centredness work like imprisoning walls around the individual, because of which he simply does not see. So, the great task before him is to remove the smoke-screen caused by them and to open himself and listen to the song of life. The Light, the Eternal Light which is also Life and Love is playing round him. He should let the Light enter. The lowly grass, the little squirrel or the little naked child on the road,—everything, every being around him has a message for him. Will he be open and listen?

As a plant or tree, while drawing the sap from deep within itself, is constantly open to the breeze, the light, the rains without, and in due season, puts forth beautiful flowers with their sweet fragrance to the joy of all people, so the individual should also learn to be open. Constant openness of one's being is an essential pre-requisite for seeing or understanding.

As the individual learns to be open and to observe, he begins to see the course of his life, the flow of his thoughts and desires, the direction they move. He perceives his own conditioning due to external or extraneous influences, the impositions from without, the suppression or the twisting of his life brought about by ages of family or social traditions, caste or class prejudices or so-called religious ideas and ideals. He sees through them, and the conditioning begins to dissolve, and sooner or later, with the clarity of perception, it goes, as the mists disappear with the rising of the sun. The life within is freed, and once more it begins to flow its natural course with ease and spontaneity. It is only in such a free and natural condition of life that the individual may discover his true vocation.

Much of the conditioning of human life is due to wrong education imparted to the child and the youth. Some of the Theosophical leaders, Dr. Annie Besant, Dr. G. S. Arundale and others, with a band of devoted workers, did pioneering work in the field of education. They not only wrote and spoke on education but also showed in a practical way by running

several educational institutions at Varanasi and elsewhere, how to impart Theosophical or national education in the right manner. Unfortunately, circumstances have so changed that at present, even in the schools and colleges run under the supervision of Theosophists, the spirit of Theosophical education is lacking. Education as imparted in general is almost mercenary and mechanical. The parents and teachers all seem to have lost vision and faith.

To Madame Montessori, every child was a little Messiah. Dr. Arundale looked upon every child as a God Becoming. That vision is no longer bright before us. We, the parents and teachers of today, excepting a rare few here and there, do not have love for the young—love which means constant care, consideration and courtesy. We miserably lack the energy, the enthusiasm and the cheerfulness, which our leaders possessed in a great measure, to inspire the youth. The result is that in many homes, schools and colleges, fear and gloom still pervade the atmosphere. In such stifling circumstances, it is impossible for the child or the youth to express himself freely and to find his true vocation.

The great task before the elders is to create in homes, schools and colleges an atmosphere in which the young may grow to manhood in utter freedom. This means that all elements of domination, coercion, threat or fear must be eliminated from the atmosphere and that the relationship between the teacher and the taught, the guardian and the ward must be based on deep understanding and love. The elders should surround the young with all that is true and great, noble and beautiful. The inmost nature of man, as Theosophy posits, is in consonance with the truth and beauty in nature. As the young is inspired to seek the True, the Good and the Beautiful in a free and affectionate atmosphere, he begins to express his inmost life, his truest nature, freely and spontaneously and this enables him gradually to unfold his deeper interest in life and ultimately to discover his true vocation.

Vocation is 'something which you love to do, which is natural to do.' It may or may not be paying, but it is a work in which the individual is deeply interested; it is a work which he does with full attention, with his

whole being, and which brings to him abiding joy and peace.

Vocation is distinguished from profession which the individual may enter for earning money or with some other ulterior motive or due to exigencies of circumstances, but vocation is a work which is his own and which is not actuated by any motive. It is a work which is his life, and to him the work is both the means and the end.

Vocation or *Sva-dharma* is also to be distinguished from *Dharma* or duties. Due to family and social ties, the individual may have several duties to perform or obligations to fulfil but they are not his vocation. Similarly, due to exigencies of circumstances, such as drought or outbreak of an epidemic or war, he may have to do work which does not come, strictly speaking, within the scope of his vocation. This is, nevertheless, duty or *Dharma* to be cheerfully faced and performed. While *Dharma* may be many, *Sva-dharma* is one and the only one. While *Dharma* may vary due to changes of time and circumstances, *Sva-dharma* is constant and eternal, it being in harmony with man's eternal nature.

At the present stage of human evolution, in most cases, it is very difficult for the individual to find his true vocation, but this should not lead to inaction. He must clearly recognise his obligations, relating to his family or outside it, and try to fulfil them to the best of his capacity. It has been said: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' In the spirit of such instructions, if the individual tries to do each piece of work which comes to his hand with interest and as an offering to the Lord, that will enable him to know himself more truly and to discover his true vocation.

It has been said above that constant openness of one's being is an essential pre-requisite for discovery. To this may be added an attitude of constant helpfulness. As the plants and trees are pouring themselves out all the time for the joy of all around, so also the individual must learn to give, to serve and to sacrifice with joy. 'What is the best that I can give or contribute?' 'What way can I serve best?' Such questions the individual

should, off and on, put to himself, in quiet moments and in solitude. The deep within him will probably give the answer, and if he is open and alert, he will listen and discover his true vocation.